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**PHẠM THỊ KIM CHI**

**A STUDY OF COMFORTING  
IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE**

**Field: THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

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**M.A. THESIS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
(A SUMMARY)**

**Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. LƯU QUÝ KHƯƠNG**

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University of Danang

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. LƯU QUÝ KHƯƠNG

Examiner 1: Assoc. Prof. Dr. TRƯỜNG VIÊN

Examiner 2: Dr. NGŨ THIÊN HÙNG

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 RATIONALES

Comforting lies in one of the most sensitive areas of interpersonal communication. It is a speech act with which we attempt to affect the beliefs and behaviors of people. In every day life, there are numerous times and situations in which people feel too depressed and even collapsed and definitely need to be comforted.

Each nation or language has a different culture with different characteristics. Comforting in Vietnam follows an interactive pattern that differs from Western norms, making a Vietnamese speaker be easily distinguished from speakers in other cultures. This pattern is found in the event in which the Vietnamese comforter sincerely wants to help someone out of the current situation. Here, maybe, a ritual pragmatic interplay represents all possible interactions of Vietnamese speakers. However, to the best of my knowledge, the problems posed for Vietnamese learners of English have not yet been adequately investigated.

Therefore, it is hoped that the findings of this study would contribute to supporting those of many previous studies and also show distinguishing features of comforting compared with other speech acts. In addition, this study on pragmatics might help us effectively deal with this language area to contribute a small part to the learning and teaching pragmatics.

### 1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

#### 1.2.1. Aims

- Study the utterances that English and Vietnamese speakers use to comfort other people and find out their syntactic and pragmatic features.

- Find out differences and similarities between two languages, with particular reference in terms of syntax and pragmatics in comforting expressions.

#### 1.2.2. Objectives

- To present the syntactic and pragmatic features of comforting expressions in English and Vietnamese.

- To compare and contrast the features mentioned above to clarify the similarities and differences of the two languages in this field.

- To suggest some implications for the teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Vietnam.

### 1.3. A JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

The study tries to show the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese of syntactic and pragmatic features of CEs.

The study on CEs in different types of discourse in English and Vietnamese will be a contribution to present knowledge of the field, and the findings of a descriptive and contrastive analysis between English and Vietnamese CEs will be beneficial for Vietnamese learners of English and for the process of teaching English as well.

### 1.4. THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is concerned with the description and analysis of the typical syntactic and pragmatic features of CEs in relation with politeness in spoken discourse in English and Vietnamese. In the

study, the descriptive and contrastive analysis of CEs are presented in English and Vietnamese.

### 1.5. THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the syntactic features of comforting expressions in English and Vietnamese ?
2. What are the pragmatic features of comforting expressions in English and Vietnamese ?
3. What are the similarities and the differences between English and Vietnamese in comforting expressions in terms of syntax and pragmatics?

### 1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study is divided into five chapters as follows:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Background
- Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology
- Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion
- Chapter 5: Conclusion -Implications - Limitations - Suggestions for Further Study.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES RELATED TO THE TOPIC

Austin [3] stated and discussed conditions for performatives, possible criteria of performative. He also made distinctions between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

Searle [42] stated the importance of studying speech acts and developed the speech act theory initiated by Austin. He categorized

speech acts into 5 groups: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives.

Yule [53] mentions speech acts with locutionary act and perlocutionary act.

Đỗ Hữu Châu [54] considers the importance of speech act in communication activities. Nguyễn Đức Dân [55] has studied pragmatics and analyzed the Vietnamese related data systematically. Nguyễn Quang [61] has further studies of other categorical dimensions in cross-cultural pragmatics such as subjectivity vs. objectivity, directness-indirectness and positive politeness vs. negative politeness is given.. Đinh Thị Thu Thảo [48], Lê Văn Bá [4], Trương Thị Phương Trang [47], Phạm Đình Tường [49] and many others have offered intensive empirical studies of various speech acts.

### 2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

#### 2.2.1. Definition of Terms

- *Comforting*: making somebody who is worried or unhappy feel better by being kind and sympathetic towards them [24, p.10].
- *Comforting expressions*: like comforting utterances, an act of giving others some comfort through utterances [24, p. 25].
- *A strategy of comforting*: a verbal move, such as expressing sympathy or reassuring hearer's feeling that is used as a part of the total act of comforting [28, p.1980].
- *Pre-posed supportive act*: the act which serves the function of either explaining or putting conditions upon the speech act [36, p. 156].
- *Post-posed supportive act*: the act which serves the function of expressing certainty about the effectiveness of proposed action or seeking feedback from the hearer [36, p. 157].

### 2.2.2. The Speech Act Theory

The basic insights of speech acts theory were first offered by Austin [3] and Searle [43] with the common theme that when saying something, one is simultaneously doing something. In other words, an “utterance act” not only contains a message but has a social force in itself.

All of the speech act theorists, who inherited, refined and developed it, share a common view that speech act is a unit of speaking and performs different functions in communication, or “a basic and functional unit of communication” [17].

Austin [3] identifies three distinct levels of action beyond the act of utterance itself. He distinguishes the act *of* saying something, what one does *in* saying it, and what one does *by* saying it, and names these the “locutionary”, the “illocutionary” and the “perlocutionary” act.

The illocutionary act is the basis act of producing a meaningful linguistic expression. It is the act that is performed with some purpose or function in mind. The illocutionary act is performed via the communicative or illocutionary force of the utterance.

Yule [53, p.46] names these conditions as *general conditions*, *content conditions*, *preparatory conditions*, and *sincerity conditions*. In other words, “*the utterance must be said by the right person to the right person in the right place at the right time in the right manner*” [53, p.21].

According to Searle [42], there are five basic types of the classification of speech acts:

- Declaratives: Change the state of affairs in the world (wedding ceremony) world-to-world direction of fit.

- Assertives or Representatives: Describe states or events in the world (claim, report, assertion) world-to-world direction of fit.
- Expressives: Express feelings or attitude to something (apology, complaint, greetings, sympathy...) no direction of fit.
- Directives: Get hearer perform or do something (request, suggestion, command, advice, etc) world-to-world direction of fit.
- Commissive: Commit the speaker to some future action (promise, offer, threat, refusals) world-to-world direction of fit.

**Table 2.1: Ways of Classifying Speech Acts Made by Yule[50]**

Speech Act Type	Direction of Fit	S = Speaker; X = Situation
Declarations	Words change the world	S causes X
Representatives	Make the words fit the world	S believes X
Expressives	Make the words fit the world	S feels X
Directives	Make the words fit the world	S wants X
Commissives	Make the words fit the world	S intends X

Speech acts are further classified into direct and indirect speech acts based on the direct and indirect relationships between their structures and functions.

Also, we have an indirect speech act whenever there is an indirect relationship between a structure and a function.

### 2.2.3. Theory of Politeness

#### 2.2.3.1 Face-saving

Brown and Levinson [13] define positive face as one’s desire to be approved or accepted by others and negative face as one’s desire to be free from imposition from others. These two types of face, they can be lost, threatened, damaged, or maintained, and

elevated. Brown and Levinson also claim that certain speech acts are inherently face-threatening, i.e. they may threaten either the positive or the negative face of the interlocutors involved.

### **2.2.3.2. The Notion of Face**

The theory of politeness and the notion of face are discussed thoroughly by reviewing the *politeness rules* (*Don't impose; Offer options; and Encourage feeling of camaraderie*) by Lakoff [29, p. 32], the *maxims of cooperative principle* (*quantity, quality, relation, and manner*) by Grice [22, p.45], the *politeness principles* with seven maxims (*tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, meta maxim, agreement maxim and sympathy maxim*) by Leech [31, p. 231]).

### **2.2.3.3. Face Threatening Acts (FTAs)**

Brown and Levinson [13] divide FTAs into four groups:

1. *Acts threatening the hearer's negative face are those which indicate that the speaker does not intend to avoid impeding the hearer's freedom.*
2. *Acts threatening the hearer's positive face are those which indicate that the speaker does not care about the addressee's feeling, wants, that is, he does not want hearer's wants.*
3. *Acts threatening the speaker's negative face are those which offend the speaker's negative face.*
4. *Acts threatening the speaker's positive face are those which directly damage speaker's positive face.*

There are two kinds of redressive actions: positive politeness and negative politeness.

- *Positive politeness is oriented toward the positive face to hearer. Positive politeness minimizes the threatening action by*

*reassuring the hearer that he or she is valued by the speaker, that somehow the speaker wants what the hearer wants, or that they are members of the same in-group.*

- *Negative politeness is oriented mainly toward hearer's negative face. If the act to be accomplished is more threatening, speaker selects this strategy, redressing the threat to basic claims that tertiary and self-determination directly, for example by apologizing or being indirect and formal.*

### **2.2.3.4. Positive and Negative Politeness**

Brown and Levinson [13, p.130] assert: "*Negative politeness is specific and focused; it performs the function of minimizing the particular imposition that the FTA unavoidably effects.*"

Brown and Levinson [13, p.10] assume that "*positive politeness is redress directed to the addressee's positive face, his perennial desire that his wants (or the action acquisition / values resulting from them) should be thought of as desirable.*"

In most Western cultures, especially in English-speaking countries, the people are most inclined to negative politeness. Negative politeness is the collection of the most informative and popular strategies in languages to make up for FTA.

Conversely, the Vietnamese culture seems more in favor of positive politeness. As Brown and Levinson [13, p.101] suggest: "*In positive politeness the sphere of redress is widened to the appreciation of alter's wants in general or to the expression of similarity between ego's and alter's wants.*"

### **2.2.3.5. The Speech Act of Comforting**

According to Hornby [24, p.10], “*Comforting is to make somebody who is worried or unhappy feel better by being kind and sympathetic towards them.*”

Comforting can also be defined in another way “*Comforting is to show sympathy with and soothe H’s sad or hurt feelings, to encourage him/her, to show S’s willingness to help H, etc.*” [41, p. 3].

For example:

[2.1] To a death: *Âu cũng là mệnh trời. Xin chia buồn.* [86, p. 12]

[2.2] *You have my deepest sympathies on the death of your wife.*  
[112, p. 35]

. The S produces utterance containing an act of sharing the feeling unhappy with the H.

Or for a property loss:

[2.3] A: *I’ve lost all my money and credit card.*

B: *Oh! Don’t be so sad. Lost money saves life.* [116, p. 123]

In this example, (B) produces utterances containing an act of sharing the unhappy feeling with (A) and comforts (A) by confirming the good side of the loss, misfortune with a hope for a better life.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

This is a qualitative and quantitative study executed with a contrastive and analysis.

#### 3.2. DATA COLLECTION

##### 3.2.1. Sampling

The samples for the analysis are the actual situations of comforting in utterances in both written and spoken discourse.

#### 3.2.2. Data Collection

As presented, the data in English were mostly taken from short stories and novels such as “The Best American Short Stories” [128], “The Most Interesting Stories in the World”[120]... The data in Vietnamese are mainly taken from short stories, novels by writers such as Nam Cao, Ngô Tất Tố, Nguyễn Hồng, Lê Lưu... and from “Tuyển tập các truyện ngắn chọn lọc”[105], “Tuyển tập Nam Cao”[104], “Truyện ngắn của các nhà văn nữ Việt Nam”[106], ...

#### 3.2.3. Instruments

The instruments used for collecting data are printed materials and the google for searching the Internet.

#### 3.3. DATA ANALYSIS

Syntax: We examine with the sentence structures in comforting expressions.

Pragmatics: We examine the attitudes, the cultures of the persons who comfort the others.

#### 3.4. PROCEDURE

First a list of examples is set up.

Second, we examine some English and Vietnamese comforting situations.

Then we study the linguistic features in syntactic and pragmatic in comforting others.

Next we discuss the results of analysis above, compare the similarities and differences between the two languages then give explanation to these.

Finally, from the generalized conclusions about the comparison we put forward the suggestions about English teaching and learning. These are implications for comforting in

communication as well as for diplomatizing, making contact with the people effectively.

### 3.5. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

#### CHAPTER 4

#### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1. THE SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF COMFORTING EXPRESSIONS (CES) IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

#### 4.1.1. The Syntactic Features of Comforting Expressions in English

##### 4.1.1.1. *Comforting Expressions Viewed in Terms of Clause Types*

##### a. Imperatives

a1. *The Imperatives Without a Subject*

a2. *The Imperatives with a Subject*

##### b. Interrogative

b1. *Information Questions*

b2. *Polar Questions or Yes-No Questions*

b3. *Tag questions*

##### c. Declarative

##### d. Negative

##### 4.1.1.2. *Comforting Expressions Viewed in Terms of Modality and Tense*

a. The Modal Verbs/ The Modal Auxiliaries

b. The Modal Adjuncts

**Table 4.2: Summary of the Position of Modal Adverbs in English**

Position	Front	Central	Final
<b>Modal Adverbs</b>			
Definitely	+	+ } Preferred	+
Certainly	+		+
Surely	+		+
Possibly	+	+	+
Maybe	+ }	+	+
Perhaps		+	+
	Preferred		

**Table 4.3: Summary of Features of Modal Adverbs in English**

Semantic Meanings	The speaker's comment on what he/she is saying		
<b>Modal Adverbs</b>			
	Strong modality indicating conviction, firm belief, strong-commitment to a future	Medium modality Somewhere between the two extremes commitment to a future action	Weak modality Expressing some degree of doubt, weak commitment to a future action
Definitely	+	-	-
Surely	+	-	-
Certainly	+	-	-

Probably	-	+	-
Possibly	-	-	+
Maybe	-	-	+
Perhaps	-	-	+

#### 4.1.1.3. *Comforting Expressions Viewed in Terms of Sentence*

##### *Structures*

a. Utterances Realized by Incomplete Sentences

b. CEs Realized by Utterances of More than One Clause, One Sentence

*b1. Pre-posed Supportive Acts*

+ **Conditions sentences**

+ **Pacifying**

*b2. Post-posed Supportive Acts*

+ **Certain Expressions**

+ **Request for Feedback**

#### 4.1.2. The Syntactic Features of CEs in Vietnamese

##### 4.1.2.1. *Comforting Expressions Viewed in Terms of Clause*

##### *Types*

a. Imperatives

b. Interrogative

c. Declarative

d. Negative

e. Concession

##### 4.1.2.2. *Comforting Expressions Viewed in Terms of Modality*

##### *and Tense*

a. The Modal Verbs/ The Modal Auxiliaries

b. The Modal Adjuncts

c. Particles

#### 4.1.2.3. *Comforting Expressions Viewed in Terms of Sentence Structures*

a. Utterances Realized by Incomplete Sentences

b. CEs Realized by Utterances of More than One Clause, One Sentence

*b1. Pre-posed Supportive Acts*

*b2. Post-posed Supportive Acts*

+ Certain Expressions

+ Request for feedback

#### 4.1.3. *Discussing the Similarities and Differences of CEs in English and Vietnamese*

*Table 4.6: Summary of the Similarities and Differences*

*of Clause Types of CEs in English and Vietnamese*

Clause Types of CEs	ENGLISH	VIETNAMESE
Imperatives without subject	+	+
Imperatives with subject	+	+
Negative	+	+
Interrogative	+	+
Declarative	+	+
Concession Structure	-	+
Ways of weakening the imperative force	<i>please, won't you, why, don't you, will you</i>	<i>- modal words nghe, nhé, đi, nào... - address terms chosen</i>

**Table 4.7: Summary of Similarities and Differences in the Syntactic Representations of CEs in English and Vietnamese**

Languages		English	Vietnamese
		Syntactic Features	
Similarities	Clause types	All clause types (mainly imperative, interrogatives and negatives)	All clause types (mainly imperative, interrogatives and negatives)
	Utterances Construction	Utterances may contain incomplete, complete sentences or more than one sentence	Utterances may contain incomplete, complete sentences or more than one sentence
		They may be added with pre-posed or post-posed moves, vocatives...	They may be added with pre-posed or post-posed moves, vocatives...
	Sentence structures	Simple sentences, complex sentences, compound sentences. One - word or one-phrase sentences	Simple sentences, complex sentences, compound sentences. One - word or one-phrase sentences
	Modality	Modal auxiliaries, modal adjuncts	Modal auxiliaries, modal adjuncts
	Differences	Grammatical categories as main devices (mood, modal finites word form, word order..)	Lexical categories as main devices (functional words, particles...)

#### 4.2. THE PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF CEs IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

#### 4.2.1. The Communicative Purposes of CEs in English and Vietnamese

*4.2.1.1. Soother*

*4.2.1.2. Encouragement*

*4.2.1.3. Sympathy*

*4.2.1.4. Advice*

*4.2.1.5. Offer of Support*

*4.2.1.6. The Combination of Type “Soother” (So)*

*4.2.1.7. The Combination of “SOS” Type (Sympathy and Offer of Support)*

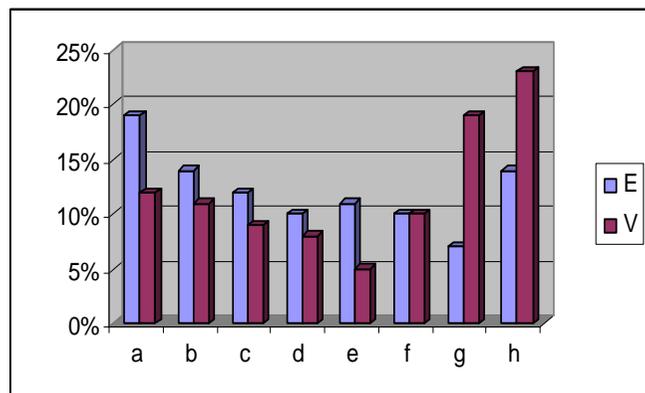
*4.2.1.8. The Combination of “AE” Type (Advice and Encouragement)*

*4.2.1.9. The Similarities and Differences of Communicative Purposes in English and Vietnamese*

**Table 4.8: Realization of All Communicative Purposes Used to Give a Comfort**

Communicative Purposes		English		Vietnamese	
		n	%	n	%
a	Soother	41	19.09	26	12.38
b	Encouragement	31	14.09	25	11.90
c	Sympathy	28	12.72	19	9.04
d	Advice	22	10	17	8.09
e	Offer of support	25	11.36	12	5.71
f	The Combination of “So” Type (Soother)	23	10.45	21	10
g	The Combination of “ASOS” Type (Addressing + sympathy + offer of support)	17	7.72	41	19.52
h	The Combination of “AE” Type	32	14.54	49	23.33

	(Advice + Encouragement)				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100</b>



**Figure 4.1: Frequency of All Communicative Purposes Used to Give a Comfort**

#### 4.2.2. The Politeness Strategies of CEs in English and Vietnamese

##### 4.2.2.1. Positive Politeness of CEs in English and Vietnamese

*a. Noticing, Attending to H's wants*

*b. Intensifying Interest to H*

*c. Exaggerating Interest / Approval*

*d. Use of In-Group-Identify Markers*

*e. Agreement Seeking*

*f. Making Offers / Promises*

*g. Being Optimistic*

*h. Giving or asking for reasons*

*i. Assuming Reciprocity*

*j. Including both S and H into the activity*

*k. Asserting Knowledge of H's wants*

*l. Consoling or Encouraging*

##### 4.2.2.2. Summary of Positive Politeness Strategies of CEs in English and Vietnamese

**Table 4.11: Realization of Positive Politeness Strategies of CEs**

Positive Politeness Strategies		English		Vietnamese	
		n	%	n	%
a	Noticing/Attending H's wants	32	14.81	35	16.35
b	Intensifying Interest to H	12	5.55	14	6.54
c	Exaggerating Interest/approval	5	2.31	4	1.86
d	Use of In-Group-Identify Markers	27	12.5	18	8.41
e	Seeking agreement	12	5.55	10	4.67
f	Making offers/Promises	25	11.57	27	12.61
f	Being optimistic	10	4.62	15	7.00
h	Giving or Asking for reasons	8	3.70	7	3.27
i	Assuming Reciprocity	15	6.94	17	7.94
j	Including both S and H into the activity	20	9.25	10	4.67
k	Asserting knowledge of H's wants	26	12.03	30	14.01
l	Consoling or encouraging	24	11.11	27	12.61
<b>Total</b>		<b>216</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>100</b>

##### 4.2.2.3. Negative Politeness of CEs in English and Vietnamese

*a. Being Conventionally Indirect*

*b. Questioning / Hedging*

*c. Being Pessimistic*

*d. Minimizing the Imposition*

*e. Giving the Deference*

*f. Impersonalizing.*

*g. Avoiding Privacy / Personal Questions*

**4.2.2.4. Summary of Negative Politeness Strategies of CEs in English and Vietnamese**

**Table 4.12: Realization of Negative Politeness Strategies of CEs in English and Vietnamese**

Negative Politeness Strategies		English		Vietnamese	
		n	%	n	%
a	Being Conventional indirect	40	15.32	15	7.14
b	Questioning/Hedging	22	8.42	20	9.52
c	Being pessimistic	24	9.19	25	11.90
d	Minimizing the imposition	20	7.66	18	8.57
e	Giving Deference	18	6.89	27	12.85
f	Impersonalising	37	14.17	32	15.23
g	Avoiding Privacy/personal questions	35	4.59	5	2.38
<b>Total</b>		<b>206</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>100</b>

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### 5.1. A SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This study is carried out in the light of pragmatic, therefore some of prior researches of many distinguished scholars in the field as well as relevant theories are mentioned in the Literature Review. In Chapter 2, we first review in detail the theoretical framework for

this study, namely, speech act theory and the politeness model developed by Brown and Levinson. The examination of politeness studies in Vietnamese confirms that the concept of face, which is central to politeness, is culture-specific. While Brown and Levinson's formulation of face is oriented toward an ideal individual autonomy, Vietnamese face is oriented toward an ideal social identity. Since the data for this study come from comforting utterances, we also review theory of comforting and the reason why study comforting in Chapter 2.

As regards methodology, in Chapter 3 we first review some of the most common data collecting techniques in empirical research, but only contrastive method is suitably adopted for the descriptive analysis of this study. Basing on the collected data, we have classified and arrange expressions into different strategies. In order to carry out the study effectively, we have read numerous theoretical materials related to speech acts and other issues concerning to the research. After that, we set the outline to specify the steps of the study.

As for the data collection is concerned, we had to rely on the document review which consists of samples taken from linguistic books, novels, short stories in English and Vietnamese.

After selecting and classifying the data into categories that are set in the outline, we described, analyzed and made a contrastive analysis to clarify the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese in the ways of performing CEs. The results of the findings were stated and discussed in chapter 4 which are summarized in the following section.

In Chapter 4, the syntactic features of CEs are realized in English and Vietnamese. We have described and analysed the syntactic features of CEs in terms of the Clause Type (consists of declarative, imperative, interrogative, negation and concession structure), Modality and Tense (the modal verbs, modal adjuncts, particles), Sentence Structures (Incomplete sentences, conditional sentences). In the pragmatic features, we have communicative purposes and politeness strategies.

In communicative purposes, eight purposes are used to relieve H's hurt or sad feeling, offer H the better future, show S's sympathy towards H. With regard to the speech act of "comforting", it has been confirmed that several different parallel or sub speech acts and their combinations are usually employed to give comfort to H, viz. *soothing, encouraging, sympathizing, giving advice, offering S's support*.

Politeness strategies consist of positive politeness strategies and negative politeness strategies. Both English and Vietnamese people mostly preferred positive strategies like noticing / attending to H's wants; making offers / promises; asserting knowledge of H's wants; consoling / encouraging. Apart from them, the Vietnamese also employ with high frequency "asking personal questions". Meanwhile the English resort much to "using in-group identity markers" and "avoiding disagreement". Besides, expressing comforting requires communicators to be sensitive because it is the time their partners were unhappy and even in miserable conditions. In order to conduct successful communication, S has to share the same feelings or show his / her concern towards H.

## 5.2 IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

In reality, the contrastive study on the syntactic and pragmatic features of CEs in English and Vietnamese will help learners have more understanding about CEs in any forms and with whatever implicature they mean. What differences and similarities are there in the ways English and Vietnamese people express comfort? These problems will help the learners a lot in acquiring these languages.

### For language teaching

In both English and Vietnamese, teachers should pay attention to teaching the sentence structures of CEs, for example,

+ In English: "I'm / We're so/really sorry..", "....sorry to hear about... ", "...will/ be going to...", "Can I...? Is there anything...?", "Let I know if..", "If I were you I would, You'd better...", "Don't...", "Why don't you...?" and so on

+ In Vietnamese: "Đừng...", "Miễn...là", "Miễn sao..", (S) + *cứ, phải, VP..; Sao...không?; (xin) đừng (có, mà, nên) + do X (+modal word); chớ, chẳng, chả (nên)+ do X... .*

Through the result of the investigation, teachers have an opportunity to explore more sentence patterns containing CEs to support their language teaching. From this, they can provide their students with knowledge of parts in a sentence so that students practice language proficiently.

Teachers should teach CEs patterns in particular situations. Learners might be asked to read these situations of CEs and tick the answers in the appropriate box. Then, learners write down how they would comfort others in each situation.

Teachers should help learners distinguish between CEs with other speech acts such as *sympathizing, expressions, encouraging* ...based on sentence structures, clause types...

### **For language learning**

**For native learners:** They can discover some more CEs with fully linguistic features contributing to their study and daily practice. They can know how to use these CEs to enhance their communicative effects. Additionally, through the result, learners master how to use language in certain settings to obtain the best effectiveness in daily communication.

**For foreign learners:** Learners are enriched with the vast sources of CEs with the linguistic features that support their study, research, work and communication or social experience and so on via the expressing of language in social contexts of the target language. They also have an opportunity to grasp common pragmatic features of CEs.

### **5.3. LIMITATIONS**

- Due to the lack of relevant materials relating to CEs in both English and Vietnamese, the study may not have been thoroughly discussed and analyzed as it should be.

- CEs are a very subtle and high face-enhancing act. It can be expressed by many different strategies involving politeness and other factors such as tones, facial expressions and body language. It would be more interesting for the study if these factors were included.

### **5.5. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

As mentioned from the scope of the study, this is only a preliminary study of comforting expressions in English and Vietnamese. There are still some important aspects that need further studies.

- Other intralinguistic factors in expressing comfort: addressing forms, modality...

- Extralinguistic factors in CEs: eye-contact, facial expressions, gestures, etc.
- Investigation of how Vietnamese learners of English perform the speech act of comforting and the pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2.
- The influence of the gender factor on the differences and similarities in performing the CEs in the two languages.